Engraving by Venturini (1685): front view of the Organ Fountain.

narrate that when Pope Gregory XIII paid a visit to the villa in September of 1573, he was so impressed with sound of this organ that he insisted on congratulating the artist responsible for it in person.

In 1566 excavations for the four pools got underway. The pool beneath the Organ Fountain was begun and never finished, just as the grotto beneath the fountain that was supposed to contain the sibyls (eight antique statues) and the Fountain of Antinous, which was to be right by the pool and act as its background.

In 1611 a part of the giant group with Neptune which had been begun for the fountain on the opposite side was placed under the huge cascade of the Organ Fountain. Here in 1927 the modern fountain of Neptune was set up. Along the second transversal axis, in the center, is the Fountain of the Dragons which, the chroniclers of the 16th century tell us, was built in a single night for the visit of Gregory XIII whose family coat-of-arms contained a dragon [3]. This chronicle-legend has been disproved by documents (see the Paris Manuscript) which report that the fountain was designed even before the election of Gregory XIII. In the middle of the huge basin four giant dragon heads spit water while amidst them a powerful jet spurts forth. The jet used to be turned off and on to create explosion noises. Alongside the fountain are two staircases winding around the fountain itself and on the railings two little graded canals from which the water de-

[3] This fountain is now commonly known as the Fountain of the Dragons, but it would be more appropriate to call it the Fountain of the Dragon. In fact, what appears to be four dragons in the center of the basin are actually four of the hundred heads of Ladonis, the monster who helped the Hesperides to watch over the golden apples. This is confirmed in the Paris Manuscript which describes the fountain as follows: « It is called the Fountain of the Dragon because it shows the famous Dragon who guarded the Garden of the Hesperides. As the ancient texts recount, the dragon has one hundred heads, and from each mouth spouts water into a huge fishpond. »